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1962/11/06

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

November 6, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Secretary

FROM: INR - Roger Hilsman

SUBJECT: Moscow's Double Ploy: Avoiding
Verification While Retaining a Base

Recent statements by Kuznetsov together with Soviet activities in Cuba reveal at least the general thrust of current Soviet intentions with respect to Cuba. In brief, Moscow is apparently now aiming for a post-crisis situation with Cuba intact as (1) a military position sufficiently strong to require a major US campaign to eliminate it and (2) a Communist bridgehead in the Western Hemisphere.

Key Elements in Soviet Policy:

1. Minimize Verification. Moscow's speed in dismantling missile sites and shipping them as partly deck cargo on freighters already in Cuban ports seems to be designed not only to avoid further intelligence compromise of the equipment but also to dodge the verification issue. Kuznetsov has ostensibly been frank about the numbers of launch pads and missiles in Cuba (which, coincidentally or not, generally conform with what the US discovered for itself and made public) and about the schedule for removal.

The purpose behind these moves is apparently to permit Moscow to announce in about a week that the weapons the "US considers offensive" have been removed and that the US has been given adequate assurance of this fact via Kuznetsov in New York and by its own observation of the deck cargoes on Soviet vessels leaving Cuban ports. It is conceivable (although, in view of our ignorance of what Mikoyan is accomplishing in Havana, far from certain) that the Soviets and Cubans will offer some limited visits to former missile sites as further proof of the dismantling. In any event, the prospect is that with the end of this phase, Moscow (and, of course, Havana) will insist that there is no need for any further assurances to the US and will seek to terminate whatever checks on incoming Soviet ships may at that time be in operation.

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10/10/62

Date: 4/3/62

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2. Insist IL-28s Not "Offensive" Weapons. In addition to the effort to minimize verification, Moscow is attempting to limit the Khrushchev concession to MRBMs and IRBMs. Even though the Khrushchev letter specifically left the decision of what constitutes an offensive weapon to the US, they now say that an IL-28, by virtue of its age and characteristics, is only defensive. They will undoubtedly argue that the aircraft have been turned over to the Cubans and are operated by Cubans (some Cuban pilots have in fact been trained on these aircraft in the USSR).

The assumption behind this position is probably that if the US chooses to make a major issue of these aircraft, the Soviet case would command strong world support, especially against the background of the speedy Soviet withdrawal of the missiles. In any event, Moscow probably feels that forceful US action against the aircraft is unlikely. If the US uses the IL-28s as justification for continuing the quarantine, Moscow may expect world support for the US will dwindle rapidly -- since many of the smaller states will accept the argument that the US is pressuring not the USSR, which has fulfilled its obligation by removing the missiles, but "little Cuba."

We believe at the same time that, whatever Moscow's present calculations on this matter, a convincing US indication that we mean to have the IL-28s removed may serve to change the Soviet's currently optimistic assessment and may, in fact, lead to their removal.

3. Prevent Unilateral US Surveillance. Thus far, Soviet objections to our unilateral air surveillance of Cuba have been relatively routine. It is to be expected that once the Soviets announce that all their missiles have been removed, these objections will become more insistent and that they will be reinforced with increasingly unambiguous indications that the air defense system in Cuba will go into action. Our latest information on the surface-to-air missiles indicates with a high degree of certainty that these weapons remain under effective Soviet control and operation, even though Soviet officials deny this and even though Castro claims that the U-2 was shot down by "Cuban anti-aircraft." Moscow would probably calculate that evidence of Soviet control of the SAMs will act as a substantial deterrent on the US in conducting high-altitude overflights -- which provide the only effective means of searching the Cuban countryside for secret weapon sites. (In this connection note that indications of activity at the SAM sites forced CINCSAC to cancel today's U-2 flights.)

Moscow probably estimates that its own international posture will be enhanced by its prompt removal of the missiles. Moscow also probably concludes that, in consequence, the US will command only spotty support for unilateral surveillance, and even less for retaliation in the event a US aircraft is shot down.

Thus, by minimizing verification of the removal process, and by deterring or at least inhibiting unilateral US surveillance, the Soviets hope to retain considerable freedom for clandestine military activities in Cuba while at the same time meeting Castro's objection to any form of surveillance (whether US or international).

4. Continue Maximum Soviet Military Presence

a) Possible Retention of Nuclear Strike Capacity. It is clear that the USSR intends to maintain a strong air defense system in Cuba. As indicated above, it now appears that the SAMs are and will continue to be operated and controlled by the Soviets. Under the umbrella thus provided, and given our inability to obtain a satisfactory assurance that all Soviet MRBMs and IRBMs, and the equipment associated with them, have in fact been removed, it cannot be excluded that the Soviets will seek to maintain at least the rudiments of an offensive strike capacity in Cuba, possibly to be augmented later if and when the circumstances make this propitious. Our inability to confirm the whereabouts of the nuclear warheads that must have been associated with the missiles and the nuclear bombs that may have been associated with the IL-28s is especially critical in this respect. This is particularly true if we do not succeed in obtaining the removal of the IL-28s.

b) Possible Establishment of Submarine Facility. A Soviet submarine base in Cuba could play an important role in the command and control of Soviet submarines in the Atlantic. The fishing port is, of course, the most obvious candidate for such a facility. To the extent that the Soviets can hamper surveillance they will regard themselves as free to develop such a facility.

c) Summation. In short, the Soviets, while unable to turn Cuba into a major strategic strike base at this time, apparently intend to preserve a substantial defensive bastion which would (1) require a major US attack to eliminate, and (2) would permit retaining some offensive capabilities now, like the IL-28s, and introducing others later. Even the possibility that a skeleton missile capability will be preserved, to be augmented later, cannot

be excluded. This situation, while perhaps not as dramatic and immediately threatening to the US mainland as some 40 missile launch pads would have been, could still eventually mean a substantial increase in Soviet ability to strike the US.

Implications for Castro

If the Soviets accomplish the general lines of policy and action outlined above, they will have gone a long way toward eliminating Castro's disenchantment over the removal of the missiles and over the Khrushchev-Kennedy agreement which seemingly ignored him. In the process, Moscow may conceivably be willing to forfeit the formal US anti-invasion guarantee, but it would probably calculate that even without such a guarantee a US invasion will be unlikely for the foreseeable future. Castro, although undoubtedly irritated by exile activities, probably does not find them entirely without value: they provide a propaganda equivalent to his own subversive activities, a pretext for his military buildup, and a claim on Soviet protection.

The main outcome of the crisis, from Castro's standpoint, will be his survival, his ability to avert international intrusion into his territory, the maintenance of powerful defensive and some potentially offensive military strength, the preservation (perhaps the deepening) of the Soviet commitment, and the opportunity to make Cuba a going concern with Soviet Bloc economic assistance. Having so recently faced what he probably thought was a massive US invasion, and having seen the Soviets shun a direct confrontation with the US, this prospect undoubtedly exceeds Castro's greatest expectations.